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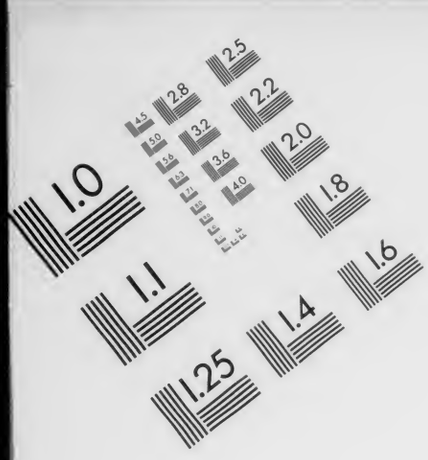




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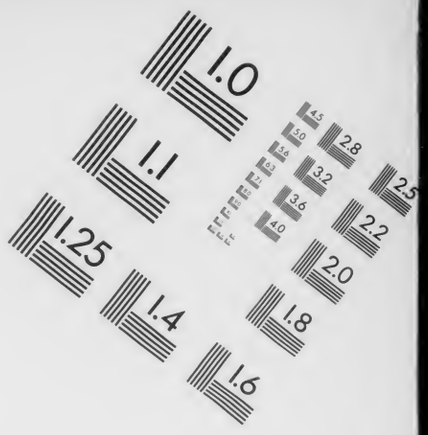

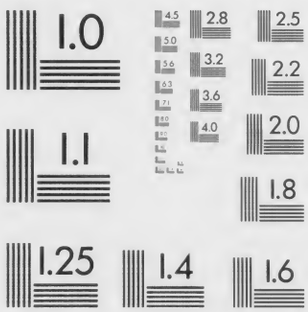


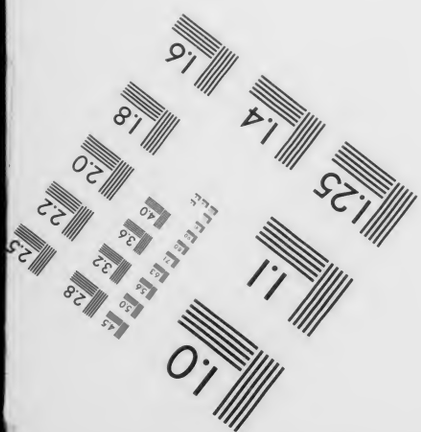


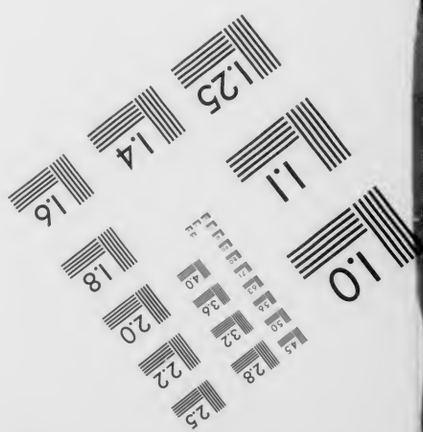


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# ON THE FORMATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL OPINION AND THE FUTURE MIND

# TWO ESSAYS ON THE FORMATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL OPINION AND THE FUTURE MIND

BY WILLIAM MITCHELL BOWACK

EDINBURGH: JAMES THIN
55 SOUTH BRIDGE 1898

13 June 99 H.D.B

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# FORMATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL OPINION

# FORMATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL OPINION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE main purpose of a study of the history of philosophy is to establish a collective psychology. Just as by introspection and intro-analyses we lay bare the deepest motors of the individual mind, which we term the science of psychology, so by the study of national and racial conceptions, by the examination of earlier periods of human history, and epochs of abnormal and brilliant philosophical speculations, do we seek to discriminate and determine the elements of racial psychology, of mass movements, of the permanent in the flux of nations and humanity. The present seems a suitable opportunity to review the history of philosophy, and see what permanent elements have been established.

In the first place, we may observe that in recent years there have been two important fields of investigation opened up which were unknown to or neglected by the earlier writers upon the study of philosophy. The first is the investigation into the religions and speculative opinions of primitive peoples.

These exhibit to us the genesis of speculative thought and the stages of thought evolution from animism and spiritualism to the higher abstractions and ideations of the present day. The second is the opening to the light the buried literary treasures of ancient Egypt, Assyria, India, and China. These oriental forms have run their full natural course from the crassest and most incoherent opinion to forms of philosophic thought which some of our most advanced schools in modern Europe but rethink and restate in modern language. For purposes of collective psychology they are consequently very important. They are the history of informal philosophy. It is a mistake to suppose, as has been too much the case in the past, that formal philosophy is either the most extensive in matter or most fruitful in suggestion. It is the handiest, no doubt, and most convenient, but it is by no means the richest in material. Informal philosophy not only embraces the fields of primitive and oriental thought, but suggestions made or implicated in religion and science as well. It touches religion because religious worship is always directed to the highest abstraction or conception of the ultimate in existence of the time. Whether it is nature worship or spirit worship, adoration is always directed to the highest in nature or man. Much so-called science in its ultimate abstractions deal with the same problems and think the same thoughts that metaphysicians do, though expressed in other terms, and though the motives of their investigations are different. They do not seek to establish a system of philosophy, but they



implicate it. Or at all events their ultimates in abstraction carry within themselves the crux of the philosophic problem. A philosopher, then, or metaphysician, who confines his investigations within the limits or data provided by the history of formal philosophy, or on a comparison of the merits of the different formal systems of philosophy, is thinking or idealising on a very small part of the material necessary and lying to hand for a full synthesis of philosophic thought.

Viewing informal philosophy as we have defined it, the first thing that strikes us is its multiformity, its almost infinite variety of conception and conclusion. Perhaps that is the reason why it has been so much neglected. The task of sending some ray of light or order through such a tangled mass seemed hopeless or not worth the trouble. Yet undoubtedly its very naturalness and informality constitute a certain value. It represents the ultimate conclusions of unconscious ideation. It is by no means certain that the man who starts with the conscious purpose of finding the ultimate in thought or in nature, or what embraces them both, the ultimate in existence, is at all better placed or as well placed as those other thinkers who have no such formal intention, yet whose thoughts necessarily lead that way. Anyway, the spontaneous conceptions of the ultimate, when the mind is following its unfettered bent, are most important elements in a collective psychology.

Now we think the multiplicity of opinions among the informal philosophies can only be accounted for

by the fact that the form of philosophic opinion, like all other opinion, is conditioned or created by the circumstances of the place or time. Among primitive peoples we have simple and illogical ideations; among civilised peoples, more elaborate conceptions; among warlike and enterprising peoples, thoughts of a god of war or of an active personal providence; among oriental peoples, worn down by tyranny and helpless before mighty natural forces, we have a fatalistic philosophy. While in an age of progress in material science we are confident there is nothing in existence but forms of matter. The ultimate is either a chemical change, or physical force, or something of that nature. So much, we think, will be conceded by formal philosophies concerning their informal rivals. That they are multiform, and that their multiformity is the consequence of their environment or of circumstances of time and place.

Of course, to suggest that formal philosophy, the philosophy of the student, the metaphysician, and the sage is also multiform, and equally the consequence of environment, will be treated as rank heresy. It is true, nevertheless. And that it is true is very important, because it breaks down the barrier between formal and informal philosophy, and drives us to seek for an ultimate solution on principles common to them both. To prove the multiformity of formal philosophy is no difficult task. It is enough, the history of philosophy itself proves it. That it is no less the creature of circumstance and time we shall briefly show.

Take, for example, the attitude of Kant towards the



existence and attributes of God. Having first, under the direction of pure or theoretic reason, rejected the cognition of the Infinite, he proceeds under the practical reason to reinstate the non-cognisable in the temple of truth. The abysmal darkness of the incognisable frightened him; he required a reasoned objectivity to rest his intellectual vision upon. His countrymen were theists to the core. His age was imbued with the notion of personal agency and power. And what Kant's unbiased reason rejected, the pressure of his environment and his unconscious gravitation towards the public opinion of his time compelled him unwillingly to restore to his emasculated philosophy in another form, or rather through another mental process.

Or take the case of Spinoza as an illustration of the fact that even the accurate apprehension, far less than the discovery of truth, is a matter depending upon the conditions of the apprehending age. It will be conceded now that Spinoza's thought is the very purest form of theism. To find language to describe his notion of the Unconditioned, he used the term Substance. That term best illustrated that something without limitation which was the Jewish philosopher's conception of God. With him Substance is the Absolute. Yet the terms in which the thought is stated shocked the age in which he lived and wrote. To the men of that age God was a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Even the statement of the God thought in terms of matter, as Substance, was hateful and blasphemous to

the mind of the time. Now, under our modern material culture, when all phenomena within us and without us threaten to resolve themselves into matter or conditions of matter, the forms and terms of Spinoza's thought are no longer odious to us, seem no longer inappropriate to the subject matter. Spinoza is now regarded, and truly regarded, as the exponent of the purest form of theism on the one hand, and curiously in virtue of the terms of his thought as the highest phase material philosophic thought has reached on the other. Afterwards we will deal with this apparent contradiction. Meantime it shows that even the apprehension of a formal philosophy depends upon circumstances of place and time.

Auguste Comte and his philosophy, however, furnish the most striking illustration of the masterful influence of contemporaneous circumstances over systematic opinion. Comte excludes from the limits of his philosophy all opinion which cannot be verified under the canons of the inductive logical process. He thus excludes metaphysics and the greater part of philosophy as generally understood. We do not stop to inquire whether his system does not really unconsciously subsume that very body of metaphysical truth he ostentatiously excludes, whether we have not more assured certainty concerning the fundamental principles of metaphysics than anything Comte regards as the only knowable, or whether the inductive logic does not implicitly assume in its essential process as much as is implicitly contained in the syllogism of the deductive. But it is our



contention that Comte's whole system was a close consequence of his personal environment. The subtilties of the metaphysicians and the unsubstantial idealisms of transcendentalism had dissolved in France before the universal scepticism of the revolutionary period. It was an age of new departures, new experiments, and fundamental changes. The new had become synonymous with the true. It was of the earth, earthy. In their revolt against all authority the hostility of the French people against religion arose not only because it was a system of restraint and authority, but because it was regarded as the chief support of the arbitrary temporal power. To strike at religion was to sap one of the main supports of absolute temporal government. To shatter religion effectually, the blows must be struck at the metaphysical assumptions upon which all religions are based. Then man himself and his material interests bulked most largely before the mind of the time. Events were so surprising and of such absorbing interest that the present and transient excluded the contemplation of the future and permanent. Passion and will displaced the spiritual and intellectual. The necessity of immediate and constant action precluded introspection. The foundations of the hopes for the future of the race were to be laid in the immediate present. Comte's philosophy reflected all these various influences. It embraced only the present, the practical and the positive. It was grounded on externality, while subjectivity was ignored. It excluded traditional authority in morals, religion and philosophy. It was

the apotheosis of the human and the grave of the divine; the recognition of man as the chief object and only interest in creation. Comtism was thus the natural outcome and exact reflex of the spirit of the age. But in this respect that philosophy was but a pronounced example of the influence of environment upon all philosophical opinion. Age after age we see various schools of thought arise. These schools have developed their particular forms, not by accident, not under the eclectic guidance of pure reason, but because new conditions were accompanied by new knowledge, and seen under a different light, the truth of one age appears error to its successor.

We may take as established, then, the multiformity and extreme variability of philosophical opinion, and that the variability arises from the pressure of the environment from without, and sympathy with that environment from within. That, however, does not take us very far, unless at the same time we can show some consistent principle moulding this thought chaos into thought cosmos. Looking broadly at the history of philosophic opinion, we find it all through its course divided into two great schools of thought. The one school attributes to all phenomena a spiritual origin; the other, a material one. The question always presented for solution is—'Is the ultimate in existence matter or spirit?' Among the older Eastern philosophies, and among the later philosophies of science in Europe and America, the solution is found in nature, in matter, and force. Among the Greeks, the latest philosophic forms were spiritual and



idealistic, and, on the whole, such has been the result arrived at by the most influential of European schools in modern times. But when we examine the circumstances attending the discovery or formulation of these opinions, we find that nature or materialistic philosophies always appear when and where nature is more powerful than man, where nature is the most powerful factor in man's environment; while, on the other hand, spiritualistic or idealistic forms are the characteristic of those nations and epochs where man has established a victory over nature, where man is the most potent factor in man's development and environment. Put shortly, we say man's environment determines the form of his philosophical opinion: where nature is supreme, his solution is materialistic; where man is supreme, his solution is spiritualistic.

Through both these great permanent forms there runs a steady movement towards unity, identical in character, though outwardly diverse. It is a process of *unification* merging the *many* in the *few* and the *few* in the *one*. In materialism it is suggested by the subordination of minor to greater natural forces, of the solar system to its common centre, the sun. In anthropomorphic conception it is suggested by the gradation in rank and power in human society, the whole culminating in the power of the head of the community or state. Thus nature worship runs through materialism to pantheism; and spiritualism through animism to polytheism and theism. Yet, even in this movement towards unity they each preserve a special characteristic. In materialism there runs the accompanying

idea of immovable predestinated fate, the universal reign of law or force, the insignificance of human will before the majesty of nature. In spiritualism there runs the idea of causation, of active personal agency, of prevision and victory over nature. Its unity is in a magnified, an infinite chief or king.

But there is also a common moment when informal opinion is merging in formal. In materialism it comes when the problem of existence has reached the stage when for thought itself a place has to be found, and it also has to be accounted for. In spiritualism, when the conception dawns that the means or instrument of man's victory over nature and society is thought itself; that man's victory is that of mind over matter, of intelligence over environment. Then materialism merges in pantheism. Nature is the outward clothing of Bhrame or thought. In spiritualism it is *the idea* which is conceived as the form upon which all the flux of phenomena rests. The lasting and true is in both cases the same. Thought, the idea, is the common *moment*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GENETIC FORM

To establish the truth of these contentions, we will briefly run through the more salient and persistent forms presented in history.

Let us first glance at the genetic form. In every quarter of the globe there have been discovered and described primitive peoples living in isolated localities under the simplest natural conditions, and whose opinions and habits of life have been preserved by that isolation from the alteration and improvement following upon contact with a later and higher civilisation. They are vestiges of the earlier stages in the process of evolution. With these observations before us, we are able to form a fair conjecture as to their explanations or theory of the facts of existence. To primitive man the material world, the earth on which he moves and rests, requires no explanation. It is never present in his thoughts as an active, potential factor. Its existence and reality as an ever-existing and unchanging fact requiring no explanation is the underlying assumption of those simple thoughts. At the same time the primitive consciousness of self is unrealised. Man's thoughts, emotions and volitions are so spontaneous,

that to reason upon them no more occurs to him than to any of the higher animals. He is a child, governed by feeling, not intellect, accepting with implicit trust facts as they appear to his indiscriminating senses. But though to primitive man his own personality needs no explanation, it is the standard he applies to the varied phenomena around him which may arouse his curiosity, or secure his attention, or which requires to be accounted for. He is *unconsciously* conscious of a personality, his own, which observes, determines and acts. Motion and intention, action and personality would be the facts most frequently presented to his notice in his relations to externality. These qualities he could not but attribute to all other human beings with whom he came in contact, for they in every respect resemble, and in parallel circumstances act like himself. Thus his first differentiation is that of himself and fellows from mere dead inorganic matter. He has formed a conception of life, of personality. He could not fail to notice that his material surroundings did not move, did not act, presented no evidence of intelligence, and had no resemblance to personality. Surrounding animal forms, however, also differ from merely material objects. For they also possess the quality of motion; they manifest all the signs of apparent intelligence and purpose. The stealthy approach and the manifest cunning shown by animals in the pursuit of prey, or in eluding pursuit, were too strikingly like a savage's own conduct in like circumstances to escape his notice. Besides, animals show courage and manifest signs of anger, fear and affection.



They are born, grow, decay, and die. So numerous are the points of similarity, that it is no matter of surprise that primitive man recognises in all animals a right of kinship born of the possession of the same vital principle and the same intelligence and purpose which animate himself. At this stage the whole animal creation is, as we may say, spiritualised; that it has attributed to it all the savage has realised as characterising himself.

But in many respects the vegetable kingdom exhibits phenomena resembling that of the animal. It bursts into life after an apparent birth. It grows, decays, and dies. It changes colour, shape, and appearance. It sustains life as the flesh of animals does. In these circumstances we need not be surprised to find that among all primitive peoples, especially those in tropical or semi-tropical climes, life and personality is ascribed to the more prominent vegetable forms. We have seen that motion *per se* is one of the most striking factors in man's original conception of life. Therefore, in primitive culture, motion among inorganic objects is related to the principle of vitality. For instance, the sun and moon, stars and meteors, the clouds, rivers, and ocean, are all assumed to be alive and to move in virtue of the fact of living. Abnormal manifestations of natural or destructive forces, intermittent or mysterious phenomena, have ascribed to them the same virtue. For instance, the echo has always been associated with the personality of some prominent contiguous natural object. Volcanoes also, irregular, startling, and destructive in their activities, whirlwinds and tornadoes, thunder and lightning, in the suddenness of their

advent and destructive effects resembling the fierce attack of an avenging enemy, have all been attributed to an animating personality. Objects so mixed up with everyday life as a savage's instruments of the chase and household, the canoe, the arrow and spear, and even the domestic fire, have not escaped from the general ascription to a living force. Thus the earliest explanation applied to the facts of existence, and therefore the earliest form of philosophy, is vitality, personality, a life corresponding to the interpreter's own. It has been named animism, and we do not quarrel with the term.

Animism is an easy stepping-stone to nature worship. It is a movement of extension in relation to the number of *natural objects* conceived of as something superhuman and influential over human affairs, while it has the tendency to correspondingly neglect or degrade *living* subjects or powers. Great rivers such as the Ganges and Nile, great forests or mountains, and, indeed, all striking natural objects, come in for a large share of worship and attention, and in the idea of the supernatural thus associated with them receive that sufficient explanation which satisfies the primitive mind.

## CHAPTER III

### NATURE PHILOSOPHIES

The transition from nature worship to pantheism is easy and almost imperceptible. The religion, philosophy, and poetry of India furnish us with illustrations of the process, progress, and product. In nature worship the objects adored are numerous, individual, and detached. They are not drawn together into a systematic whole. The only unity they possess is a descriptive unity, that of a class comprising an infinity of single individual objects. But in pantheism all these scattered phenomena are brought together and united in a homogeneous whole. It is precisely the same movement which merges the multiplicity of polytheism in the unity of theism. It arises from the craving of the mind to find an ultimate principle on which all existence rests. Each abstraction is but the stepping-stone to the next. This movement is a comparatively late one in the history of the race, as we have seen that it is absent in animism, in later nature worship, and in polytheism. As a process of generalisation, its extension in the field of religion and philosophy depends upon the state of culture and the abstractive power of the time. The contemplation of the different objects of nature

worship could not but suggest a striking difference in their relative importance, ultimately merging in the supremacy of the solar orb and the unity of the solar system. Thus the many in nature would give place to the few, and the few to the one. A hierarchy would be established among natural objects, until a conception was reached embracing within its folds all the varied infinity of individual existences. It is the operation of this tendency which furnishes the principal distinction between nature worship and pantheism.

It is impossible to distinguish, far less to describe, all the varied forms of religions and philosophical beliefs to be found among the heterogeneous millions of the Indian peninsula. No other district of the world displays such a profusion of races, languages, sects and cults. No other would so richly reward systematic observation and study, since the ethnological, philological, and religious distinctions are still so strongly marked as to permit of accurate affiliation and classification. We shall present, however, sufficient to illustrate the point of our contention that forms of philosophic belief evolve in logical sequence under the influence of natural causes.

As it is in the poetry of the Indian peoples we find the best sources of information concerning their religions, it is to the same source we turn to discover their philosophical beliefs. The pantheism of the Indian philosophy is a logical and consistent development of the prior nature worship. The change is that of extension and adjustment, not that of kind. Man never separates himself as an existence *sui generis* from



surrounding nature. He is included in nature as a superior animal, with all the privileges enjoyed by other forms, but no more. Nature is an animated whole. It is a unity, not a duality. Man is an important element in the environment, though not so important as nature. True, among these simple and dependent peoples, much of whose prosperity and happiness depends upon the character of their rulers, the personal becomes in some cases divinised. The personality of a powerful king or chief removed by distance of time or place into a vista of obscurity becomes surrounded in the oriental imagination with a halo of divinity. But he is not so powerful for good or evil as the most striking natural phenomena. His influence pales before that of the sun, the tempest, earthquakes, drought, pestilence, and other natural phenomena. Accordingly, although the personal side takes rank among the gods, the gods themselves only rank among deified natural phenomena, and among them only occupy a secondary place. The natural embraces and dominates the spiritual in pantheistic forms. Universally animated nature is the starting-point, a sentient, divinised cosmos is the ultimate fact in their philosophy.

All natural phenomena, however, do not present evidence of equal power, nor yet do they all form factors of equal importance in the life environment of a race. It is, therefore, not unreasonable that a hierarchy should be formed among the powers of nature ordered and proportioned to their relative importance in the physical world. We find this tendency exemplified in an old India hymn (translated by Griffith) of

much beauty and power:—'Risen in majestic blaze; lo! the Universe's eye; vast and wondrous host of rays, shineth brightly in the sky. Soul of all that moveth not, Soul of all that moves below; lighteth he earth's gloomiest spot, and the heavens are all aglow.' In these lines the important part assigned to the sun in the order of nature is fully recognised. He is addressed not only as a wonderful material object, but as a sentient divine being. He is the eye of the universe, and the soul, not only of the inorganic world, but of the organic as well.

The sun, however, is not always the highest object of worship or conception of the widest fact in existence. His most prominent characteristics are light and heat; but fire also gives out light and heat. Besides, light is given by the moon, stars, and lightnings. There must therefore be some natural phenomena greater and more powerful than the sun, the common source from which all these objects derive their common quality. This is found in light, whose most pronounced manifestations or incarnations are the sun and fire. These three form the Vedic trinity; light being the principal or supreme power. Nor can we wonder at this conception. It is light that clothes all nature with beauty and joy, and brings forth life and activity. When light is withdrawn, all nature droops and sleeps, the dark, cold curtain of oriental night is drawn, the deadly miasma rises from the moist and dewy ground, noxious animals steal from their lairs, and black deeds of rapine, revenge, and murder are perpetrated under its covering shade. But when light returns, all these are dissipated or revealed under the searching influence of its benevolent rays.



Even this is not the highest conception of Indian natural philosophies. They sometimes pass into a semi-metaphysical stage. This stage is only reached in an era of high culture, when admiration for and wonder at the achievements of the mighty instrument of consciousness has made it an object of special analysis. The ever-pressing question, 'And what then?' is as applicable to the last abstraction upon phenomena as the first. Where does the light, the sun, the fire, the soul, all nature, living or dead, come from? Are these phenomena the ultimate facts in existence, or is there a wider fact on which Creation floats as ship on ocean or cloud in air? To these questionings a solution was found in the idea of an impersonal yet knowing causation beyond all and embracing all nature. The Brahminical Pundits termed it 'That' or 'Bhrame' or 'Thought,' the conscious, though impersonal, in universal being. It may be described as that unknown, perhaps unknowable, something which lies below, causes, and contains within itself all the phenomena of nature and consciousness. Descartes may call it God, and Spinoza Substance, but those terms represent an identical thing in thought with the Bhrame of the Indian philosophy. But let the learned pundit explain this conception in his own discursive, oriental, and expressive way. It is given by Sir John Colebrooke in his translations of old Vedic poetry published in this country many years ago. The following instance

is an attempted description of 'Bhrame,' or as it is termed here, 'That.' 'Fire is That, the sun is That, the air, the moon, such too is that pure Bhrame . . . . He, prior to whom nothing was born, and who became all beings. To what God shall we offer oblations, but to Him who made the fluid sky and solid earth, who fixed the solar orb, and formed the drops of rain. To what God should we offer oblations, but to Him whom heaven and earth mentally contemplate? The wise man views that mysterious Being in whom the universe perpetually exists, resting upon that sole support. In Him is this world absorbed; from Him it issues; in creatures He is twined and woven in various forms of being. Let the wise man conversant with Holy Writ promptly celebrate that immortal Being, the mysteriously existing and various abode.'

The foregoing is a good specimen of metaphysical pantheism. We give another quotation. 'Then there was no entity nor nonentity; no world, or sky, or aught above it; nothing anywhere. Death was not; nor then was immortality; nor distinction of day or night. But That breathed without affiation. Who knows and shall declare where and why this creation took place. The Gods are subsequent to the production of this world; who, then, can know whence it proceeded, or whence this varied world uprose? He who in the highest heaven is Ruler knows indeed, but not another can possess this knowledge.' These verses bring out clearly the secondary place occupied by divinities in the system of pantheism. The divine,



though placed above the human, is regarded as inferior in importance to the system of nature. The limitations imposed upon human knowledge in relation to the absolute are likewise very fully expressed in the last two or three sentences. It is an address to the unknown God. 'In the beginning,' says another Veda, 'That was soul only; nothing else existed. The thought came to him, "I wish to create worlds," and the worlds were created.' Surely this is a sublime conception expressed in the simplest and most majestic language. We are accustomed to praise the dignity and simplicity of the biblical account of creation. 'In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.' 'And God said let there be light, and there was light.' It is difficult to imagine language more indicative of conscious power than this, so familiar to our ears. Yet only prejudice would deny a grandeur equal, if not superior, to those of Moses, to belong to the words and thoughts of the unknown Indian poet and philosopher of the distant Vedic age.

We will quote another to show the opinion of the Indian philosophers concerning the nature of the soul. It will be seen that it is not regarded as something individual, inseparably associated with a single personality, but is rather, like life, an essence or force capable of animating various forms in succession, and in itself indestructible. The occasion is the encouragement of a chief on the eve of battle by a holy pundit. Thus he speaks: 'And be thou sure the mighty boundless soul, the eternal essence that pervades this whole, can never perish, never waste away:

'tis indestructible, nor knows decay. Up then and conquer; in thy might arise, fear not to slay it, for it never dies. As men throw off their garments worn and old, and newer raiment round their bodies fold, the ethereal spirit leaves its mortal shell, and finds another form wherein to dwell. Essence of life! It lives undimmed its ray, though fiercest fire or keen dart seek to slay. Viewless, immutable, unshaken, still it rests secure, yet wanders where it will, incomprehensible! It knows not change, boundless in being, limitless in range. This is the nature of the soul, great chief! It lives for ever, therefore spare thy grief. All that is born must die; that dies be born again.'

These quotations speak for themselves. They show that their authors had been deeply impressed with the mystery of existence, and had boldly formed lofty conceptions of its true solution. It is urged in disparagement of the Indian philosophies, that they are not formal, that they are not systematised. This is unfortunately too true. But that fact, though it detracts from their usefulness and value, does not deprive Indian literature of their philosophic treasures. They have no formal logic nor yet formal religion, yet we do not deny to them the possession of reasoning or religion. Yet it would be as reasonable to deny the people of India the possession of the two latter gifts on account of the absence of the former, as to deny the existence of a philosophy of being because it has not been formulated in set terms.



One other observation we make before leaving the great material philosophies of nature. They are all fatalistic. Of course we do not mean to confine the doctrine of fate to these oriental forms. The Mohammedans who are theists hold the doctrine, while that of predestination is held by large numbers of Christians. In both cases fate is the will of God, and He might have willed otherwise. The doctrine is held by theists with a large element of elasticity which does not preclude its holders from active exertions to escape from any disagreeable consequences. To the Eastern devotee, however, fate in its most absolute sense is an inseparable part of his religious faith and philosophical belief, and is burned into his very soul. Throughout the long life of their ancient civilisation, they have ever been confronted by a nature colossal and adamantine in its manifestations. What human effort could hasten the delayed monsoon, temper the fierce rays of the sun, still the shock of the earthquake, or turn aside the pestilence that walketh in darkness? The helplessness of weak humanity in the face of nature has been burned into the inmost constitution of their mind by ages of suffering. The orderly sequence of the processes of nature supply the other element of the fatalistic idea. Among these processes there is nothing changeful or haphazard. All events unroll in regular and measured method. Nature is now as it ever has been within human memory. Events in their course can be foretold with unfailing accuracy. What folly, then,

to suppose that human nature which is itself but a part of that greater nature, should be exempt from the operation of the same inexorable laws, or that weak human effort can forestall or avoid the inevitable.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPIRITUALISM

We return to the original starting-point of all philosophical belief, to animism, in which all individual phenomena characterised by motion, change, growth, or action, are endowed with life—a life shared by man himself in common with his animated surroundings. In that form of belief we have to endeavour to discover the genesis and subsequent development of that spiritual and immaterial philosophy which is the contrast of those material systems we have just been considering, and which forms the other great school into which philosophic opinion has always divided itself. It includes spirit worship, anthropomorphism, mythology, polytheism, theism, and idealism. Its very first step introduces duality into man's belief, because at the very first stage after animism it makes a distinction between body and soul, matter and spirit. How has this dual conception arisen? Undoubtedly, the first great cause is that among these peoples of spiritualistic proclivities, man is the most important factor in man's environment. As we have already pointed out, in the more temperate regions of the globe, nature, if less prodigal of her gifts, is at

the same time less fearful in her manifestations, and becomes much more amenable to human energy and foresight. But what is lost to nature is gained to man, for his power, for good or for evil, over his neighbours is vastly increased. Man has then become the most important factor in the struggle for existence, and this growth of importance is at once reflected in the position which personality is supposed to occupy in relation to nature and natural phenomena. Whatever explanation phenomena may be capable of, it will at all events reflect in some way that superiority over and detachment from his material surroundings of which man has now become conscious.

In the search for such an explanation man's own experience then as now is naturally his guide. In that experience what are the facts which would first arrest the attention of a simple and primitive observer? In his own case there appears life within life. His body manifests within itself movement, striving influences, and changing conditions of pleasure and pain apparently as individual and independent of his will as that of other objects familiar to his observation and extraneous to himself. The throb of the various pulses, breathing, the consumption of food and drink, the sensation of hunger and thirst, disease, varying and conflicting mental conditions, all suggest to his mind personal agency and activity. His individual existence, so far from being single and homogeneous, appears a union of two or more vital powers upon the simple basis of a common place of abode. For instance, the Caribs



connect the pulses of the body with spiritual beings, and especially consider that in the heart dwells man's chief soul. They use the same word for heart, soul, and life. So do many other peoples. In the same way the act of breathing has been identified with the life or soul. The West Australians use one word for breath, spirit, soul. So do the Greenlanders and Japanese. Even the Hebrew word 'mephesh' passes through all the meanings of life, soul, mind, animal. The old Roman custom of the nearest kinsman bending over the dying form of his chief to inhale his last breath is evidently another relic of the same superstition. Now, though only able to observe indications of the actual presence of these supposed living powers in his waking hours, yet, when the savage's body is chained in sleep, his mental vision becomes clearer, and he discovers the true explanation of the various vital phenomena which before perplexed him. He now perceives that his body is but the home of various spiritual powers or beings, an arena for the display of spiritual activity; that he himself possesses or is possessed by one or more spirits which can leave his body to visit other beings and places, and which are stirred with the same feelings and desires of which he himself is conscious in his waking hours. He supposes that all other animated beings are similarly possessed, for they also visit him in his sleep as his spirit often visits them. It follows, therefore, that the world is filled with a vast crowd of spiritual beings, invisible, indeed, except under certain favourable

conditions, but not the less real on that account.

Once in possession of this conception by the aid of dreams, many circumstances in common experience tend to strengthen and confirm it. The dark mysterious shadow which so persistently accompanies the individual in the sunlight or flits beside him in the moonlight journey through the woods; the likeness which he sees of himself when he gazes into the still, clear pool or lake, might well suggest to a simple mind a ghostly agency. So likewise do the circumstances of trance, fainting, or insensibility and sleep, all in outward view so much resembling death, in which the body seems temporarily deserted by its spirit, which after a while returns again, re-animating the soulless form. Natural death also suggests the same idea. In that event the body is there with all its organs apparently uninjured. It is something additional to and independent of the mere corporeal structure which marks the difference between the warm responsive vital being and the cold lifeless mass of clay. That difference can only arise from the final abandonment by the spirit of the dead man, of the abode it has occupied so long. All these experiences were bound to impress the primitive mind with the notion that the sentient principle which characterised his own consciousness was something other in character from mere matter, something that was different from and independent of his bodily organisation, and which was not trammelled in its movements and activities by material conditions.

The doctrine of the survival of the spirit after death



is an easy and natural development of the preceding conception. It is probably due also to the phenomena of dreams in which the living are still visited in their sleep by those who are recently dead. The continued activity of the mind during the decay of the body, and the independence of thought from the influence of material limitation, would aid the conception, which also receives confirmation from the fact, that while the destruction of the body was a matter in evidence and a fact beyond dispute, there was no evidence of that destruction extending to the soul or spirit.

At this stage, the difference between spiritualism and animism on the one hand, and spiritualism and nature worship on the other, is clearly marked. As compared with animism it has become conscious of spirit as distinct from *mere life*, and many of whose most striking manifestations are supposed to exist without any corresponding material body. In fact, the number of spiritual beings peopling man's environment far exceed in numbers and importance his estimate of the extent of his mere material surroundings. The spirit world is the real and important world to his imagination.

The difference, again, between spiritualism and nature philosophies is clearly indicated by two points. The first is that it distinguishes between the material object itself and the spirit that dwells in it. This spirit is something different from life, as it is at the same time different from mere matter. It is that sentient something which visits man in his sleep and which survives the destruction of the material body. In animism a great forest, or river, or volcano, is regarded in virtue

of the changes or motions or manifestations it may exhibit as alive. In nature worship they are objects of religious regard because of that conception of life; but in spiritualism it is the spirit itself of the wood or river or mountain that is conceived as a being altogether different and separate from the object in which it dwells, or whose movements it controls, or whose interests it safeguards. In the second place, man attributes a creative or executive function to this spirit, which has no corresponding representation in animism and nature philosophy. Man is conscious of a creative or adaptive power as an essential link in the chain leading to certain events, and in particular in the bringing about of changes in his material surroundings. In other cases where he himself is not immediately present or concerned, he knows that such events have been brought about by the interposition of his fellows, until finally through long usage he has no hesitation in assuming the fact of a personal agency in all events, even although the evidence of that agency is not a matter within his own immediate knowledge. Hence nature and natural phenomena are no longer regarded as themselves sentient beings, but they are presumed to be the product, the manifestations of spiritual agencies lying behind or associated with them. In fact, this form of belief exactly reflects the greater efficacy of man's own efforts in deciding the course of events in temperate conditions and pastoral and hunting pursuits, compared with his absolute dependence upon the course of nature in sedentary and agricultural conditions under a tropical climate.



The development of spiritualism into the multitudinous forms of mythology and polytheism proceeds with the growth of interests, knowledge, and ideas, all modified by this central conception of a causative spirit independent of body, matter, or life. In such a conception as spiritualism, existing entirely in the imagination of its believers and untrammelled by the laws affecting material phenomena, no limits can be assigned to its forms but those of the powers of the imagination itself. Their numbers, therefore, multiply in a ratio corresponding to the enlargement of man's experience. All his surroundings, all his emotions and feelings, all his pursuits, and even abstractive qualities of mind or things, have each their tutelar spirit from whom they proceed, or to whom these particular matters are the subject of special concern.

To these spiritual personalities mental qualities are ascribed the reflection of man's own mental state. These qualities are exaggerated no doubt, they are assumed to represent each particular feature in its highest development, but that is only to be expected where man is fancy free, and in the case of beings whose power and action so far transcend those of ordinary human beings. The relative character and importance of these spiritual beings are not always the same, for they vary with the circumstances of the time and place. Though they all partake of a character of independence of ordinary natural conditions, to some are ascribed the power and attributes of the divine. There is always a distinction made between these two classes in the spiritual world. Though all divinities are of a spiritual

nature, every spirit is not divine. There are ghosts, devils, and the spirits of natural phenomena, which all occupy a position secondary to that of deities. The divine is the real supernatural. This conception of the divine arises in part from the independence of spiritual phenomena of all the elements of ordinary control. Let man strive as he will he cannot escape from the presence or influence of these spiritual influences with which he has peopled his environment. They come to him in his sleeping hours, and in his waking hours his lively fancy still conceives them present. To them also primitive man assigns the numerous events which take place without any known agency. Above all there are many events in his history and surroundings which by no stretch of imagination or record of experience can he attribute to ordinary human power. These events, however, must have had their origin in a cause adequate to their production. As causation is associated in this form of culture only with human or spiritual agencies, and as it cannot be the former, it must be the latter. Then again these must be beings superior to the greatest natural phenomena which they bring about, and as superior to man as these events transcend the humble triumphs of the latter over his physical surroundings.

The next stage in the evolution of philosophic form is the gradual gradation in power and importance of the varied members of the spirit world until it culminates in a single dominating head and the many is merged in the one. The struggle of existence becomes in time very much a struggle towards



civilisation, and civilisation can only be secured by social co-operation, subordination, and discipline; man becomes more a member of society and less an independent savage. Society, that is organised humanity, steps in to fill the place in his thoughts and interests, formerly, or in other circumstances exclusively, occupied by nature. The powerful chief and ruler is now as much a necessity of social existence and source of prosperity, or as great a cause of evil and ground of anxiety as the forces of nature formerly were. Corresponding with this social development, spiritual power and rule is now conceived to repose in one supreme head, who rules over both his spiritual and human subjects. Of course at first each tribe has its own tutelar deity, to whom the tribal interests are matter of more particular concern, and who in return receives the exclusive homage of the objects of his care. But as the tribe grows into the clan, and the clan into the nation, a corresponding unification takes place in their spiritualistic conceptions. The national deity rules over and protects an increased number of subjects and interests, and is the object of worship of many more devotees. Yet, at this stage, men have no conception of a deity, the creator, the common protector, and the common object of worship of *all* peoples. Every nation recognises as most reasonable and natural the possession by other nations of a tutelar deity. The God of the Jews is still only the God of Israel, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not the God of the universe. So long as the Roman people preserved even a remnant of their democratic instinct, monotheism never became

an effective or popular opinion. But when at last the Roman Empire, united under one head, was co-extensive with civilisation, when the idea arose among the Greeks and Romans of the fundamental unity of humanity, and when the religion of the Jews became the religion of the world, then the idea also arose and took root of a personal divine spirit transcending, creating, and ruling all tribal and national deities, all nature, all mankind, and all human affairs. Anaxagoras and Plato were the first to grasp and to thoroughly realise the importance of this conception and to give it philosophic form; a form which has come down to our own time practically unchanged.

## CHAPTER V

### GREEK FORMS

With the rise of the Greek philosophy we enter the field of formal philosophy. These opinions, though not the oldest, appeal with greatest force to the modern mind, for the simple reason that they touch at some point or another all the questions in philosophy subsequently raised. Yet despite their rich variety, we shall see that Greek philosophy pursued a perfectly logical course under the influence of preceding and the contact of contemporaneous thought, modified by the peculiar and specially favourable physical and social conditions surrounding the Greek life. Greece was specially fitted to be the nursery of an intellectual race. Her climate was warm, dry, and bracing. Her soil was rich, yielding a good return to all labour expended upon it, and yet without that exuberance of fertility which would have dispensed with industrial effort. Her seas invited the enterprise of her active sons, and at the same time formed a barrier against foreign invasion. Her civil life had not destroyed during the period of her greatest philosophical fruitfulness that sense of personal independence native to the northern nations; while her political institutions and the

character of her social problems were all well fitted to stimulate an interest in those questions which lead to deeper philosophical speculations, and which the cultured leisure of her best citizens enabled them to prosecute to their logical end.

Among the early Greeks the ultimate fact in existence was found in polytheism. This was natural, because in Greece man was more important than nature. He was the effective factor in events, the most important element in the environment, and the object of greatest interest and concern. Never before had man so successfully asserted his supremacy over surrounding natural conditions; and never before or since has man attributed so much in nature, in social life, and in events to personal agency. Even creations of the fancy, and abstractive qualities of mind and things were personified and deified. Divine personalities were the cause of all. Whatever events or things required a causative explanation, received a full and satisfactory solution when they were attributed to divine agency. The explanation given was individual and independent, as applied to each particular case; but as all explanations were characterised by a common feature, that of divinity, it was an intellectual unity, it was finding the ultimate in a class. Naturally, among a democratic people divided into various small states, an *ultimate oneness* in events and things was an idea likely to suggest itself only at a late period in their history. The extent of Greece as a whole, in relation to surrounding nations and the rest of the world, was so small as to exclude the idea of universality and



absolute supremacy. Accordingly, though a certain superiority is allowed to Jupiter among the gods, it is superiority only, not absolute supremacy. Polytheism was thus not only the inherited, but the natural form of philosophical opinion in early Greece.

A departure, however, from the current conceptions took place very early in the history of independent thought. It was impossible to overlook a certain permanence, stability and uniformity, underlying all the changeful phases of natural phenomena, especially when compared with the evanescence, caprice, and instability of personal agency. Greece was the nearest Western nation to the Orient; she was just on the borderland of Eastern philosophy, and in actual touch with philosophic forms different from her own. It is also noticeable that all her most distinguished scholars, those who intended to devote their life to the pursuit of truth, considered some period spent in travel among the Eastern nations one of its essential preliminaries. Thus they became acquainted with the Eastern schools of thought, to whom a natural and material explanation of the facts of existence seemed the proper one. Accordingly, the earliest independent efforts of Greek speculation were directed to find an ultimate principle in nature around. Fire, air, water, and matter were all laid under contribution, and had their advocates. These did not explain change, however, so Pythagoras suggested number and proportion as the ultimate principle underlying phenomena, and thus as relation and an immaterial principle of matter, a distinct advance was made in philosophical concep-

tion. The Eleatics gave out pure being as the ultimate. Heraclitus, the unity of being and non-being through becoming. With Empedocles, matter and pure being were one and the same, while force became identified with movement and change.

These explanations are all characterised by the same feature of finding the ultimate principle of things in nature, in externality. But they were interpretations foreign to the genius of the Grecian mind, and were suggested to the Greek intellect by contact with the Eastern material philosophies. In the next development Grecian thought returns to its natural channel. The mind itself was too striking a fact in the conditions of existence of the time to be long content with no place, or a secondary place, in any scheme of philosophy. Accordingly, under Parmenides, spiritualism re-asserted its position in thought, for to him pure self-existent being as opposed to multiplicity, change, and non-being was thought; being and thought are the same is the affirmation he makes. This idea was still further developed by Anaxagoras, who formed the conception of a world forming intelligence which was quite distinct from and other than matter, and which was governed in its formative act by intelligent purpose and design. With Plato, reason assumes a more definite position in relation to existence. He sought to ascertain those ideas which are immanent in all thought, and which underly all perception and all thinking, and then to establish the objectivity of this thought, or the true, as he calls it, as a realm of knowledge which lies beyond all the



perceptions of sense, and is the form in which all our sense experience is set. To Plato the ideas, that is the ultimate in thought, are objectively real; the very truth of truth of which all the varied phenomena of sense are only copies or settings. Here we have the characteristic contribution of Greece to the realm of philosophy; the recognition of the place of reason in real existence, and the elevation of its essentials to the rank of the universal and necessary.

We say that the recognition of the place of reason in the order of existence is the distinctive contribution of the mind of Greece to philosophy. We must remember, however, that a somewhat similar importance was assigned to thought in itself in some of the oldest Vedic hymns. To Bhrame or thought existence is attributed prior to all existing things. From Bhrame existence emanates by the self-suggested exercise of his will and power. The Indian philosophies had therefore reached a stage of development when they were about to assume a metaphysical complexion, and when conceptions of pure reason would, or rather did, supersede their materialistic explanations of things. But that development never assumed definite form or recognised importance, and perished at its birth. In Greece, however, this task was boldly entered upon. It is not difficult to trace the causes leading up to this conception. If man, in consequence of his victory over his surroundings, had assigned to personality the first and causal place in existence, the instrument by which that victory had been mainly attained,

reason itself, gradually, but not less surely, assumed a dominant place in philosophy. Reason, in its highest manifestations, came to be regarded as the *special* characteristic of consciousness rather than will and personality. Its possession is attributed only to the divine and human. Spirit was above and causative to matter. The real and ultimate in spirit, that is reason, must therefore be the real, ultimate, and permanent upon which all phenomena rest, and from which all take their form.

Or put the process another way. The mind is the instrument of research and the sole judge of truth. The mind becomes the subject of its own observation, its operations are analysed and defined, a criterion of truth adopted, and the ultimate in thought differentiated and formulated. The mind discovers truth—creates it. It places its own interpretation upon phenomena. It possesses the initiative and determinative in relation to knowledge. It discovers that whole fields of objects of knowledge, such as colour, sound, speculative and idealistic creations, have no reality, no existence apart from consciousness; that the world itself is only a cosmos in due relation to consciousness. This leads up to the conception that reason is the ultimate in *all* truth, truth itself, the last and fundamental in being and existence. As the multiplicity and variety in form characteristic of natural phenomena are each discovered by a separate mental achievement, and are known by a separate mental operation, yet are thrown into harmonious unity by the analyses and syntheses of thought, so reason is



the formative and binding power underlying and giving coherence to all the operations of nature, the warp upon which all matter is woven into endless form. Reason is the original and archetype, nature the type and copy. If we can only reach the fundamental in thought, we have also reached the real in phenomena. Thus personality as the cause of things becomes merged in consciousness, and consciousness in its highest state as pure reason comes to be considered the essential in relation, the link between being and non-being, being itself as known.

The Platonic philosophy marks the zenith of the Grecian development. Aristotle returns to the more familiar personal as his ultimate principle. He finds it in an infinite, self-existent, intelligent, and volitional conscious Being. The multiplicity of polytheism has emerged at last in a theistic unity. Yet God and the world stand apart from each other. The one is the effective cause of the other. The real and the sensuous are two. Under the last great development of Greek thought, however, under Stoicism, they are united.

As the last great movement in Grecian philosophy, Stoicism endeavoured to reconcile all that had gone before. Thought, will, relation, force, matter, had all to be brought into harmony. Personality and nature, spirit and matter, must be conjoined under an hypothesis embracing both. This was found in pantheism. The Stoics had recognised throughout nature a certain sameness, sequence, and harmony underlying all her various manifestations, which differ

from the modern scientific conception of the universality of law in little but fulness and the terms in which it is expressed. To conceive of a God on the one hand, and a world on the other, each independent and self-substantiated, was to leave the problem at its very crucial point unsolved and hopelessly contradictory. They therefore made God and the world one. Matter is the inert formless substance. God is the vital formative conscious principle immanent in all matter, and giving it life, relation, and force. All in the world is divine, because divinity pervades its every unit. All individual existence and single phenomena come out of the divine whole and return into it again. Only universal existence is permanent and eternal. And thus in ordered sequence events unroll, becoming and non-becoming in phenomena being the necessity of the universal life. It will thus be seen that the last important development of Greek thought was almost identical with the last form of Indian philosophy, and very much resembles our scientific materialism of the present day.

With this last effort the Greek speculative mind practically exhausts itself, and its philosophic decadence is manifested by the practical setting aside of the problem of existence as insoluble or not worth solution, which is really the outcome of the teaching of the Eclectics and Sophists, or in a return to the purely sensuous in life as all that is necessary or desirable for happiness, and indeed happiness itself, the opinion of the Epicureans. From first to last, Greece had made original contributions to mental



science and philosophy over a period of 400 years, and if regard be bestowed to the paucity of materials at her disposal and the limited numbers of the population from which she drew her greatest thinkers, her achievements during that epoch stand unrivalled in the intellectual history of the race.

## CHAPTER VI

### NEO-PLATONISM AND SCHOLASTICISM

NEO-PLATONISM deserves a word of notice. Founded at Alexandria in the fifth century, Neo-Platonism made an independent effort to reach an ultimate principle of things, not through the exercise of reason, but by its abnegation and the substitution of an emotionless ecstasy. By its abnegation of reason, Neo-Platonism confessed the failure of the intellect of the time to supply a satisfying solution of the problem of existence, while at the same time it betrayed its Oriental origin in seeking a solution not from the actively intellectual side of our mind, but from the contemplative and non-emotional. At the same time its passivity and negation in relation to sense and reason is typical of that fatalistic and helpless attitude born in minds related to strongly manifested and inexorable natural surroundings. Neo-Platonism sought to restore to thought an absolute in which matter and spirit, objectivity and reason, are harmoniously blended. It seeks to account for the facts of existence by supposing everything to be an emanation from the absolute, the divine. First the reason soul emanates and is the archetype on which change, force, phenomena and relation are moulded. The reason soul is nearest the divine, alike in nature and in point of time, the connecting link between phenomena and the absolute. Then emanates the world soul, which is a copy in matter, the physical form of the reason soul. Thus the spiritual and personal retain their supremacy as nature is relegated to a lower place in the order of being. The soul is an effluence from the absolute, clogged and separated from the divine by reason, and to a still greater extent by sense and externality. But if the soul is to know the divine, if it is to return to itself in the divine, sense must be transcended, and not only sense, but reason. The divine cannot be reached by any effort of thought, because it is beyond all thought, the absolute is unthinkable. But by ecstatic contemplation of the divine, in which all consciousness is lost, in which emotion, sense and thought are transcended, and we should say in modern parlance, in which a hypnotic condition is reached, a vision of the divine is vouchsafed, or partial re-absorption of the soul takes place, a re-absorption made finally complete in death. Thus Neo-Platonism is transcendental, and if it bears witness to the failure of reason to furnish a unity of objectivity and subjectivity resting on the absolute, it on the other hand illustrates a solution of the problem of existence from the Oriental side in a pure passivity, the temporary negation or suspension of reason, emotion, self.



This intellectual failure was still further accentuated in the succeeding form of Scholasticism. Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire, lapsed into a

state of intellectual torpor. The mass of the people were creatures of feeling incapable of exercising judgment, and having to depend upon authority for their civil guidance and religious belief. A corresponding degradation takes place in their philosophical opinions, which are coarsely theistic. Neither is that conclusion reached by the aid of reason, but upon the authority of Scripture as taught by the churches. The people were divided into two classes—governed and guided, governors and guides—and to both classes the idea of personality as the most potent factor in existence was the idea most likely to suggest itself in such circumstances. Though thus rigid in philosophical form and fundamentally vitiated in method, yet within the narrow limits of their speculative field much ingenuity was exercised in adapting it to the irreconcilable inconsistencies which were everywhere revealed. Indeed, if we consider that the greater part of the intellect of Europe was enlisted in the ranks or in the service of the church for a period of well-nigh a thousand years, it would be a very surprising fact if it were not. But these speculations vitiated by their erroneous initiatory starting-point, despite their subtle ingenuity, bear throughout an air of utter unreality which has rendered them comparatively barren of permanent or suggestive truth. Scholasticism then, except as a pointed illustration of the close relationship always subsisting between the conditions of the time and the form of its philosophical conceptions, may be passed over as unimportant.

## CHAPTER VII

### MODERN SPIRITUALISTIC FORMS

When we enter the field of modern philosophy we again contemplate a well-defined thought epoch. Among primitive opinion there is no consensus, there is no synthesis, there is no merging of the local and limited in the universal. Their classificatory thoughts are those foundational conceptions common to uninformed humanity. In India and ancient Greece, however, we have seen two completed philosophic epochs where opinion has emancipated itself from the chaos of multiplicity, and ended in a thought cosmos attaining unity in a well-defined universal. Modern Europe from the time of Descartes presents a similar well-defined epoch wherein opinion itself and the causes governing its form are reasonably precise and easily traceable. Let us see how the case stands when Descartes enters upon the scene. Europe was intensely spiritualistic. It is the native philosophical development of the Northern peoples. Like Greece at the same early stage in her intellectual career, man's thought environment was surrounded by numberless spiritual causative agencies.

The supernatural was more natural to him than the natural itself. Besides an intense conviction of the existence and ever presence of God, there were millions of angels, saints, devils, witches, ghosts, and all the other paraphernalia of ignorance and superstition, filling man's thoughts, disturbing his dreams, and governing his most ordinary conduct. The Europe of Descartes had as many spiritualistic conceptions as ancient Greece, only they were gloomier, more demoniac, and had not that sunny hopefulness and beauty that characterised the polytheism of two thousand years before.

Inside this limiting thought circle there were already the germs of modification, enlargement, and ultimate disruption. Scholasticism, though a narrow logical movement within the bounds of authority, still sharpened the logical acumen of the age for the coming conflict. The acquaintance with the newly-founded Arabian school of philosophy, and the re-discovery of the ancient Grecian literature and philosophy, suggested doubt, called for inquiry, and presented choice, amid a variety of competing philosophical opinions. The growth of civic life and the extension of industry and commerce made secular interests powerful rivals to the ecclesiastical *statu quo*. The discovery of the American continent, and the progress of the newborn physical sciences disturbed and stirred the thought continuum of the Cartesian age. Europe had slept the sleep of exhaustion for many centuries, but now refreshed, awake with the consciousness of new potentialities, she stirred herself, and her shackles



shook. The new birth first found expression in the teaching of Descartes. Descartes sought to find a basis of intellectual certitude independent of authority upon which to rear the structure of his philosophy. This certain foundation he found in the consciousness of the ego of the certainty of its own existence. This certainty proceeds from the clearness and definiteness with which the assurance of that truth is borne in upon the mind. It is a matter of irresistible conviction; but it is not the only one of which we are indubitably assured. We are equally certain of the existence of God with all His attributes of infinite power, wisdom and goodness. So thought Descartes. It was this independent search after the ultimate and necessary in thought, and this self dependent test of truth which was his contribution to philosophy. He emancipated philosophy from the trammels of religion, and from the chains of extraneous authority. Philosophy thus after the lapse of centuries re-asserted her position as the ultimate and impartial guardian of the truth. That position, lost through the weakness, the sophistries, the doubts, and the sensualism of later Greek thought, had been seized and held by the courage and power of the church in the name, interests, and authority of religion. Cartesianism was the rift in the ecclesiastical lute. No doubt at the time it was claimed as a victory for religion. To have the theistic principle affirmed by formal religion and at the same time demonstrated by independent authority, was for the moment a great triumph. But while Descartes' conclusion was the normal European

traditional conception, the establishment of a new method and an independent test was full of other consequences. It set in motion that tendency, continued to the present day, to make religion and philosophy logical within the limits of their great assumption. It rationalised religion, and simplified philosophy. It destroyed all the coarser and more vulgar spiritualistic conceptions. Devils, witches, ghosts, angels, saints, and all the other paraphernalia of superstition disappeared,—slowly, no doubt, but decisively. It immeasurably enlarged the conception of the primal causation, or ultimate in existence. It also changed the process of logical proof. It had been *a posteriori* upwards through polytheism to theism, or through the contemplation of the world as evidence of causative effort, but now starting from an ultimate in thought, from a primal or necessary in thought, it reasoned *a priori*. It began where before it used to end. We say nothing of the success; we only record the fact.

Descartes' theistic conclusion has remained the normal opinion of all the principal religious schools from his own day to this. The grounds of belief have changed, the method has changed, more frequently there has only been a change in the terms in which the same thought has been expressed, in the effort to meet successful criticism. For instance, in Spinoza's case, his imagination impregnated with the full consequences of new astronomical discovery, the idea of active definable personation paled in his thought. His irreducible minimum, or nearest approach to the



unconditioned, had to be expressed in terms of matter. Substance he called it. His thought, the intellectual goal in his mind's eye was spiritualistic, a spiritualism unvulgarised by associations of human qualities. But the language of spiritualism failed to efficiently express this thought of a self-dependent ultimate without trammels of limitation, and he imported into his vocabulary terms of matter as those of wider meaning and easier of apprehension. Thus Spinoza stands in the unique position of being claimed as the representative of both spiritualism and materialism, a potential pantheist.

Descartes introduced a new method into philosophical inquiry, an appeal to consciousness and experience. It thus contained within itself all the elements of doubt and scepticism which reliance upon a purely logical instrumentation must involve. Expose a rift in the logic, or a necessary weakness or limitation in the thinking ego, and all the elaborate superstructure based upon that narrow foundation rocks. Thus the new psychologies and logical inquiries of Locke, Bacon, Hobbes, and others, threw doubt upon the logical certainty of Descartes' method, with a corresponding measure of discredit upon his main conclusions. This opened the way to a reaction in the very opposite direction, from the extreme of certainty to the extreme of doubt, under Hume. His teaching dissolved the thought nexus, the thread of continuity which running through all thought binds all experience together. He left thought and experience a heterosity, at the very utmost unconnected

particularity, without any element of stable continuity to lead through generality to unity. Hume found a chain, he left a line of unconnected links.

Kant came to the rescue at a much needed crisis, and in the notion found that common given element which binds thought to thought, experience to experience. His philosophy was constructive, and contained many permanent elements. It was the first step towards the establishment of the true objectivity of thought. It was nearly consistent, probably more so in his own mind than in those of his followers. Through it heterosity was linked into particularity, particularity to generality, and generality nearly, but not quite, to absolute unity. He narrowed the absolute down to a very narrow circle, but still it was a circle, not a point. Not an absolute, but a near approach to it; not demonstrable under pure reason, but nevertheless consistent with it and not consistent without it.

Hegel went a step further, and undertook to find in formal logic what had eluded the criticism of Kant. He professed to have found in the elements of our most necessary thought, that irreducible unit which logically and consistently unfolds itself in the idea. Hegel failed; he did not demonstrate the identity of the unfolding process in thought and things. Being and non-being may be the same thing in formal logic, but they are not the same in actuality. In point of fact, he did not establish one universal, but two. He only exhibited the inadequacy of formal logic, that it is only useful and conclusive, subsequent to that



primal assumption which he undertook to demonstrate. That is his failure in philosophy. Secondly, he failed even in his exhibition of the logical process itself. He never showed the logicality of his initiatory step in the process of diremption. There is a gap in his thought, an unacknowledged subsumption at the second stage. Conceding his second step, all else follows as a matter of course. His system of logic, nevertheless, is a marvel, and will always remain a monument to his genius, and a real step in mental science. He exhibited *the fact* of the objective reality of reason, if he did not logically prove it.

The tacitly acknowledged failure of the logic of Kant and Hegel to find a satisfying synthesis, led to another reaction and the rise of the school of relativity. That school, of which Hamilton and Mansel are the best representatives, practically gave up the battle. The problem was insoluble, or at all events unprovable, not *per se*, but from the necessary limitations of human thought. The known and the real are not necessarily coterminus. A thing not known to us under present conditions of knowledge may be known under other and later conditions. Absolute existence is inconceivable, and if conceivable, unprovable. Later discoveries had always given the lie to the preceding final synthesis. Better frankly recognise this failure of philosophy to supply a self dependent synthesis of thought and things, and find through the voice of religion a satisfying explanation, one that will satisfy alike your intellectual wants and your moral nature. So thought Hamilton and Mansel

and the metaphysical schools connected with the orthodox churches.

In Germany, however, a more hopeful and courageous spirit prevailed. A consistent and true philosophy might be presented, if it could not be demonstrated. A philosophical hypothesis might be conceived, and if consistent with all our actual knowledge, and if when projected into those gaps well known logically to exist, it formed a harmonious and consistent whole, it might legitimately be tentatively held. In science such a hypothetical induction is common enough, is often successful, and frequently receives after confirmation. Surely a process so natural and so common in the exact sciences could not be out of place in philosophy. Thus the German idealistic and transcendental schools arose. Their goal was the objective reality of thought. It was also that of Kant and Hegel. These latter tried to logically prove it. Transcendentalism said it needs no proof. Its simple presentation to the mind, and its felt satisfaction of our deepest intellectual and moral needs was sufficient. They are forecasts, philosophical anticipations rather than inductions. They are believed, because the followers of the different schools feel them to be true. Hence their irreconcilability with each other, yet the strength of conviction by which they are held, and their persistency as living philosophical forms. Such are the philosophical ideations of Fichte, Schelling, Schiller, and others.

These forms were intellectual, idealistic. They



were the philosophical scheme of students, they savoured of the lamp. The strengthened moral character of the time was sooner or later sure to have its typical philosophical representation. The development of the individual character by industry, commerce, and art, and the growth of individualism in politics since the beginning of the century, affected the popular estimate as to the most potent element in human affairs. It is not mere intellectualism—it is character, moral qualities, will. In public affairs it is the man of action that determines the course of affairs, and in the man of action it is will, power, moral qualities that make the successful man. It is morals, not intellect, that regulate human affairs. It is, therefore, moral government that must reign in the still greater universe of things. The determining factor in morals is will. If we would find the ultimate in an ordered creation, surely it is in intention will, power. Thought without will is unrealisedness. Will is the realising link between thought and things. So thought Schopenhauer. And so did Matthew Arnold, who put the matter in a nutshell: 'Force moving to righteousness.'

Looking back, then, upon that epoch of spiritualism initiated by the teaching of Descartes, we observe it has been a continuous movement from his time to the present; that it is as living a force now as ever; that the movement has been one of continuous progress in richness of thought and consistency of arrangement. It originated in an effort to prove the theistic conclusion on evidence independent of authority or revela-

tion. To do so, it instituted a new method. That started two independent movements in thought—criticism of the conclusion reached, and criticism of the method applied. The first resulted in the conception and presentation of all those thought systems or ideations, the theism, idealism, and transcendentalism of modern philosophy. They certainly brought the conception of an absolute nearer and clearer than ever before in the history of philosophy, with much more accuracy than any system of material philosophy has ever been able to do, and with that conception fixed on a definitely spiritual foundation. If none of these systems contained all the truth, or even all consistent truth, at least they all contained some truth stereotyped in literary form, necessary or useful for future synthesis.

The second movement was the most useful and fruitful. The new method under criticism and adjustment resulted in the creation of the whole modern science of mind. So far as psychology and logic is concerned, their progress is before the world. In psychology, a broad, deep, permanent foundation was laid; in logic, a nearly perfect instrument created. In metaphysics, the dream of the cult, the proof of the true objectivity of thought, that thought has all the reality in existence a fact can have, has been demonstrated. The precise psychological moment and movement when the admittedly spiritual has merged in or merged out of admittedly material conditions may not have been precisely fixed and conditioned. But the fundamental contention of the



objective reality of thought, as the most potent and extensive fact in and out of consciousness, of a reason immanent in all forms of matter, they have undoubtedly established. They have made physical science examine its limits and presuppositions, and acknowledge an otherness and a beyond. The history of philosophy shows just all that progress, those alterations of opinion, that susceptibility to the influences of contemporaneous circumstances which mark the history of other sciences, and which, so far from being an argument against its usefulness and trustworthiness, is rather evidence that it shares fundamentally in those common experiences which characterise all genuine scientific research. These researches are recorded in a body of literature which, for literary excellence, fulness, keenness of logic, and deep spiritual sympathy and insight, has no equal in the world's history. All that material or exact science claimed for themselves, philosophy has; while it has what material science never had, as an influence and inspiration not less than a subject of investigation, all that is *specially* characteristic of man, beauty, morality, self-abnegation and religion.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MATERIALISM

THESE modern opinions in philosophy we have been considering were spiritualistic. That is, they arose and were defended upon those immaterial considerations which their disciples believed to be above and superior to, causative, or immanent in all matter. We have now to review that other great school that see in matter, its forms and laws, that very real that constitutes the be all and end all of existence. It has to be observed, however, that the time and circumstances of its development in modern times are different from the circumstance of its appearance in ancient Greek thought. With the Greeks, materialism was a foreign graft, an importation from the older Oriental civilisations; it was foreign to the genius of the Greek mind, and was short-lived, at least, in comparison with their spiritualistic forms. In modern Europe it has been a slow native evolution of opinion contrary to our inherited or traditional opinions, a matter of growing conviction, and the more stable on that account. Materialism arose through the growth of material interests in industry, politics, and science, which as a movement tends to



secularise thought, and excludes from effective influence upon opinion and conduct speculations founded upon deep spiritual experience. It is a position of mere negation as regards the spiritual life—lack of spiritual insight. It is the infidelity of Tom Paine, the secularism of Bradlaugh, the agnosticism of Comte. These in themselves, however, would never have been important movements but for the patronage of medical science. The medical profession as a body are materialists, or at least agnostic with materialistic sympathies, and give that air of scientific authority which the more vulgar forms so sadly lack. Anatomists and physiologists had seen the whole inside of the human machine. There is not a corner they have not examined with the utmost care. There is not a part they have not handled and analysed (chemically). They know all that is to be known. As a result, they had found no soul or mind, nothing spiritual, nothing from which metaphysics or philosophy could obtain the slightest support. Life was a chemical process and physical aggregation. Mind and conscience a chemical secretion.

On the same material side, however, there was a higher speculative movement, with loftier and more fruitful convictions. Astronomy had revealed the immense extent, the infinitude of the material universe: our earth a mere speck in the solar system; our sun in all its grandeur less than a speck in the sidereal system, one of millions of other suns seen by the naked eye; these seen millions, insignificant compared with the unseen myriads revealed by the

telescope and astral photography. Yet these wonders of magnitude and distance are no greater than those wonders of infinite littleness unveiled by the microscope. Geology connected our living present in constant sequence with the most distant past. Chemistry showed the reign of a severe and ordered relativity governing all forms of matter. Physics supplied in force the counterpart of will and volition. Biology threw all organic life into an ordered and connected system; while mathematics and algebra, with all the pretentious precision of the exact sciences, found in number and spatial relations those connecting links which under the name of laws does service for many of the conceptions of metaphysics. With all these materials a synthesis from the purely physical side was not only possible, but from its grandeur captivating. It was that of a material universe, boundless in space and time, characterised everywhere by unvarying and unalterable sequence, or the reign of law. But it was never more than the constrained opinion of a learned few. It was as difficult to conceive of an infinite universe as an infinite God. The initial movement of matter, or the first loss of heat, or the first aggregation of matter on definite lines, just raised all those points and revealed all those difficulties that had been before the mind of metaphysicians for thousands of years. The terms used, those of physical science, where exact did not complete the synthesis, and where inexact or loose could not bear close analysis. It was shown again that even in the exact sciences empty



terms with no real co-relation to actuality might be used to gloss over or bolster up logical weakness. Still further, these purely material explanations were felt to be lifeless, inadequate, fell dead on the imagination and heart. They left out in their complete synthesis all that was best in nature and characteristic in man: Duty, sacrifice, faith, hope, charity, love, beauty, purpose, destiny—in fact, all that the human mind craved for and sought an answer to was simply put aside. If the starry firmament above was a subject of awe to Kant, no less wonderful was the small, still voice of conscience within. Material science attempted to explain the first, it simply ignored the second.

This unbridged gap, or rather chasm, between humanity and nature remained without serious reduction until the advent of Darwin. Not that some steps had not been taken before, but they were tentative, speculative, and did not even pretend to a scientific foundation. No doubt the public mind had been prepared by treatises on history, treating philosophically the undercurrents which determined great political and social movements. The writings of Adam Smith and the other economist sought to introduce the reign and idea of law where before it was unsuspected. Writers like Buckle and Lecky projected their generalisations into the field of morals and intellectual opinion. Darwin himself had no such purpose. Like Adam Smith, he did not fully realise the potentialities of his own conception. He simply sought to explain on natural grounds of great simplicity the growth and

differentiation of *special* forms in the organic world. Afterwards he demonstrated that man was no exception to the laws governing other life forms; that most of his mental qualities were to be found in embryo among the lower animal forms; that his position of superiority was one of development, not of kind. There he was content personally to leave it. But the fruitfulness of his idea was at once grasped by other thinkers. It was seen to be applicable to every department of human thought and activity. Industry, art, politics, religion, and national and racial movements were all subject to his three principles of continuous adjustment—growth, competition, and survival. Thus the inherent unity of the organic and inorganic worlds was demonstrated, our planet linked to the solar system, and it again linked with the immensity beyond. That much will be generally conceded. But it is claimed by succeeding thinkers, that in establishing his theory he laid down principles which, when applied to opinion, morals, and art, are found to be correspondingly operative, and that such consonance is only consistent with the identification of our higher spiritual life with that system of materialistic forces Darwin's followers claim to have demonstrated. Be it so. A *nominally* agnostic and materialistic philosophy that aims at welding into a harmonious whole nature and the spiritual life, is not a bad form of agnosticism. If it gives hope, elaborates morality, and synthesises a belief, whatever else it is, it is a great step forward.

But is that movement of philosophy based upon material science final? Is it not only a step in the



evolution of a final synthesis? The very completeness of the science victory is the herald of its defeat. As it links together closer and closer life and matter, organic and inorganic forms, mental processes and physical environmental conditions, it establishes a material unity indeed, but one embracing all the facts of consciousness; a unity embracing not only all material things, but all human knowledge, all human thought, and all human volitions as well. It establishes not a disjointed chaos, but an ordered cosmos. Its victory is too complete. Its seeming materialism is only verbal, is only spiritualism expressed in materialistic terms. As two persons ascending a mountain height from different sides see at the base only their respective and opposite views, but when they ascend high enough and near the goal of their exertions, find they stand on a platform common to them both and enjoy a common prospect; so does science and philosophy at their first inception stand in apparent hopeless antagonism to each other. But it is only the antagonism of imperfect knowledge. Those who climb high enough from either side, emerge into a common light, revealing an ordered, an all-embracing unity. In the higher philosophies of India, of ancient Greece, and of modern Europe, the triumph has ever been the same. You may call it Pantheism, or Stoicism, or Bhrame, or Substance, or Jehovah, or God, or any other name you please, but you always think the one ultimate thought, the universal in universal nature, the permanent in the flux of phenomena, the Infinite knowing and realising itself.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

It may be asked, have we reached or are we in sight of a final synthesis in philosophy? Well, we may say in truth that we are in view of a full, though not a final synthesis, that we have the material gathered and the foundation laid, and much of the superstructure built on stable lines; but the edifice is not complete, far less crowned, and still less than that final. Indeed, the idea of finality as excluding the idea of addition and coadjustment we put out of court altogether. No system of philosophy yet given to the world, however apparently complete and however cordially accepted at the time, has ever received that unanimous homage of the human intellect which it ever bestows upon the veritably true. No system of philosophy has the *unanimous* assent of thinking minds. Yet when Newton announced and exhibited his law of gravitation, after the first wave of opposition arising from the vested interests of intellectual error were quelled his theory received unquestioned support. It settled down among our stable and foundational scientific truths. When Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, it



would be difficult to imagine a form of opinion so radically opposed to contemporary interests and conceptions. Yet in the war that followed, Darwin came out triumphantly, and his theory, so far as it went, has in the short period which has since elapsed established its place as a permanent and stable element in science and philosophy. Here we have the real test of philosophic truth and adequacy. A principle will be given to the world, or a system formulated which, with all that simplicity and perfect adaptation to our knowledge, needs, and hopes which has ever characterised a real stage of synthesis, will command in philosophy that consensus of opinion conceded by science to Newton and Darwin. It will be so simple and clear that we will be amazed that we did not see it long before. The scales will drop from our eyes, and we will see unchallenged truth. That time is not yet, though it seems near, growingly near.

# THE FUTURE MIND

# THE FUTURE MIND

WHAT are we to do with our vast accumulations of knowledge in all branches of science, and our ever accumulating experience in social, political, and religious life. What are we to do with our growing complex of industrial and applied art?

There is no prospect of our accumulations of fact ceasing, or indeed seriously diminishing in the near future. Quite the reverse. Our knowledge of simple facts and their co-relations seem to increase in geometrical ratio. A single new idea has such a wide field of suggestion as to revolutionise whole branches of science at one time. Take electricity, for instance, modifying at one step our scientific conceptions of light and heat, our modes of intercommunication and of travel, of mechanical science and of therapeutics: it is not one art or science that is enriched, but a dozen. Or take the case of Darwin's theory of the origin of species: it is not too much to say that theory has changed, and permanently changed, the conceptions, the ideals, the policy and the literature of the world; and all within our generation. The world will never again

think as it thought before the time of Darwin: and all this brought about by one fruitful idea. It is evident at our present rate of accumulation our body of thought will in time be broken up into detached sections *through mere bulk,* with no true logical tie running through it. Each thinker will attempt a synthesis of the whole of thought from the experience of a part of it.

Two things seem to me to certainly follow under the present conditions under which knowledge is pursued. One is, that our syntheses, our reconciliations of thought and actuality, will in their final generalisations be merely verbal reconciliations, unverified by experience. One part of our knowledge will be verified in the experience of the individual thinker: but the other, larger, and ultimate part will be taken on trust and at second hand. That necessarily follows from limitations of time and human capacity.

The other consequent is when thinkers start from different or opposite fields of knowledge, how difficult, nay, how impossible it is to use the correlating terms in the same sense. Exhaustive study of one field of knowledge produces a subtilty of distinction, and a fineness of apprehension of remote co-relations in that branch, which often are really more felt than thought, which are difficult to put fully into language, which run a subtile stream of microscopic association, verifying the truth of our thoughts, yet eluding language or expression. How difficult, then, to apprehend from inadequate description a corresponding stream of delicate mental associations only possible to a specialist in another department of knowledge. There would always be something left out, something present in his mind but incommunicable to yours, that the same terms, though they might convey a parallel thought, would not communicate the same thought in all its fulness to you or to him. In brief, we think the time has now come when the task of co-ordination and synthesis is more imperative, more hopeful in prospective result, but at the same time more difficult than it has ever been, and must now be undertaken and pursued on new lines and by new means.



As the body of ascertained fact as now embodied in the general literature of any one science is more than any single individual can master in an ordinary lifetime, what we have now to do is to compile, arrange, and systematise on a scale never before attempted. It is the ephemeral, local, and personal element, the necessary and unnecessary repetition of the same facts and theories, which form the bulk of the printed matter pertaining to a science. Eliminate these, and the body of fact and thought still remaining, though doubtless large, is still within the efficient mental grasp of the diligent student. Hitherto, for such a result, we have depended upon individual effort, and not altogether in vain. A necessary step in advance to cope with our fast-growing body of fact was taken when private associated efforts compiled our encyclopedias for general or special use. Another step was taken when government undertook the

making of a catalogue of the books in the British Museum. A national undertaking that, but a recognition of the inadequacy of private effort to fully utilise the accumulated literary treasures of the nation. Yet, if it requires a government effort to merely issue a bare catalogue of our best literature, how can any reasonable being expect that the task of compiling, systematising, and codifying the universal of our knowledge can now be effectively attempted by private or voluntarily associated effort?

It is a consciousness of the last fact slowly dawning upon the public mind which has provoked in the press another, and, as we think, fruitful and practical suggestion. It is a proposal that a committee of scientists should be appointed by the various learned societies, for the purpose of supervising the admission into a standing or permanent encyclopedia of each science all well ascertained facts, and generally accepted or well authenicated theories or doctrines. Thus, say in the science of astronomy, every year the new and undisputed facts would be admitted, theories which had passed the test of verification or consensus of competent opinion, would be added in clear and simple language. The new hypotheses, or the various hypotheses in explanation of dubious matter or doctrine could be held in an intellectual suspensory account, as requiring fuller investigation at the hands of new inquirers. Exploded or disproved theories would be struck out. Thus, with the ground cleared and without loss of time or unnecessary effort, the student would be in a position to master the already ascertained



knowledge of a science, and investigators put on the track most promising of result or most needing authentication.

Even there we would not stop. If the revision was made by a permanent committee of each science, one or more members of each committee might be specialists in other and allied sciences. Thus co-ordination and not merely compilation might be assisted or even attained; and co-ordination not merely verbal or at second hand, but born of contact with actuality. It would be a stable aid in that wider synthesis we call philosophy—a philosophy not from *a priori* downwards, but *a posteriori* upwards. Surely that programme is within our practical realisation. It will be in the future. But when it does come, it can only be under the patronage and support of the State. It is only an extension of function already exercised by the State with universal approval. The State already provides primary and secondary education. It assists our technical schools and colleges. It pays a large part of the teaching and administrative staff of our universities. Let it go a step further, and affirm that the whole body of scientific thought, the product of the nation's mind, the intellectual inheritance we are building up for our children, the real bond and the truest bond that will unite the English-speaking peoples, the greatest source of future power, is a matter of national concern, deserving of national direction and support, and a true function of the highest form of government. When that step has at last been taken, then

our knowledge clearly and simply stated, consistently arranged and conveniently situated, will be within easy reach of the technical artist and scientist on the one hand; and on the other, the man devoted to a scientific life will lay the foundations of his knowledge rapidly and correctly, with a confident knowledge of where to refer to for authentic particulars—two-thirds of the battle of the scientist of our own day. With such a start at the beginning of his investigations, what discoveries and generalisations await the future race.

Our common stock of abstractions come into general use unconsciously. To the general body of the people they are not matters of conscious definition. They never seek to define them. They have appropriated them from their environment, from contact with their fellows, from conversation and discussion, from their newspaper and their reading. There is a national continuum of thought, constantly being added to by our thinkers, which saturates the mind of the nation with generalisations accepted instinctively by the general body of the people because they feel them to be true, because they are in accordance with their everyday experience. They are born into and grow up in an intellectual tradition which forms their thought and guides their conduct, and which they never challenge, and which is only examined by the studious few. It is the richness and truth of this unchallenged intellectual continuum which determines the moral position of a nation. The intellectual continuum or environment



of the present day is infinitely richer than at the beginning of the century. The difference between them is the measure of our increased civilisation. Yet when we examine it we find it simply a process of conscious and unconscious abstraction, and those abstractions used with greater facility now than at any former period of our history. Take the popular idea of the individual, family, local, municipal, provincial, parliamentary, national, civil, and cosmopolitan life. These are nine ideas represented by nine separate terms. Note the range from the one to the many, from the simple to the complex. Note also the ordered sequence that runs through the series. Now every one of these terms conveys to the average mind of our countrymen a definite, intellectual conception, and despite their complexity, are used as a rule with perfect accuracy and facility as so many units of thought, either in apprehension or dialectic. Nearly every man and woman in the country understand, with more or less accuracy, any reference in conversation or literature to them. Yet how many have made a scientific examination of the terms used. Nay, how many have even turned up a good dictionary and remembered their accurate definition? Not one in a thousand of the people using them, and using them fairly accurately every day. But go to Africa or Asia, and you will find many millions who could only understand the first two, or perhaps three terms. Even these they would not understand with the same fulness of meaning that the European would. The remaining six terms would

convey no meaning to them at all. The things themselves are non-existent to them, either in experience or imagination. They have no language to express or convey these ideas so familiar and facile to us. Now it is a further extension of this process of abstraction, its more ready transference into the national thought continuum, and its more ready apprehension and more facile use by the people, that we look for in the future as the measure and guarantee of future intellectual progress. The limits of our stock of connotations and denotations would be infinitely enlarged and enriched, yet not have lost in this process of increasing fulness their grip of experience, or their ultility as accurate units of thought. Our thinkers would comprehend more and handle more in thought than they had ever done before; while, at the same time, the number and accuracy of the abstractions used by the general body of the people would be largely increased.

We will put the matter still another way. We contend that in the intellectual sphere there is a process of abstraction which in its spontaneous, unconscious, yet rapid apprehension, resembles, or rather parallels, emotional moral feeling. That as the moral states, such as benevolence and the sense of duty, have become in time instinctive and reflex, there is an intellectual state similarly or nearly similarly reflex, and every generation growing more so. Analyse say the emotion of benevolence. In its genesis it was a product of conscious reflection on the one part, and unconscious survival on the other. In savage minds there are



occasional moments of kindly feeling, chiefly promoted by considerations of personal, family, or tribal interest. But they are only moments. They are not a habitual attitude of mind governing, or at all events completing, the cycle of emotion constituting the individual character. Still less is it that outrush of kindly feeling, unconsciously and instinctively adapted to the subjective of its recipient which makes the highest type of the modern benevolent man. The philanthropist and moralist of Roman times kept his slaves. A century ago, a reputably benevolent man could be cruel in sport and harsh to the lower animals. That is all impossible now. It is not now a matter of argument, it is a matter of right feeling. Yet that higher feeling has been reached by a long process of reasoning, is in fact a series of triumphant abstractions, now so intuitively felt in the fulness of their meaning that we require an effort of mind to realise that they are only the final outcome of reasoning and judgment. What was before conscious has become reflex. What was before matter of reason has become matter of emotion. And we argue for a parallel process, similar in kind if not so marked in degree, in the intellectual field. It may be only in its initial stages; but it is there, and, as we believe, much more real and more deeply engrained in our thought environment than is yet suspected.

It may be said the emotions have a special cerebral organ guiding reflexly conduct on presentation of appropriate objects. Well, we quite admit that. But

there is no less a cerebral organ through which we think. Why should the physical organ of the moral emotions be the only seat of unconscious cerebration? So far as physical structure is concerned, we can see no reason that what has been attained in one cerebral state should not be attainable in another; that what can be attained in moral thought should not also be attained in intellectual thought. There seems no difficulty there. What is possible in the one mental state should be possible in the other. Indeed, the presumption should be rather that what has been attained in one mental state would also be attained in the other. We should say, then, there is no less a cerebral organ through which we think, and that with such growing readiness of apprehension that the earlier stages of much complex thought are lost in the process, that the complex thought of a former generation is to us now as a simple one was formerly, and that the present generation enters upon an intellectual abstractive continuum as spontaneously, richly, and unconsciously related to passing phenomena as the emotion of, say, benevolence is. Upon no other hypothesis can the superior power and rapidity of civilised thought over the slowness, narrowness, and disjointedness of primitive people be accounted for. And it is to the increase of this abstractive power, to the increased efficiency of its material organ, to this growing though obscure reflexness, and to the vast increase of the stock of verified abstraction passed into the continuum of the national thought, in its language, literature, and science, that we look forward as the assured stepping-stones to a higher and *yet verified* synthesis of our knowledge.



Another practical measure for facilitating the acquisition of knowledge is to put our system of grammar on a more philosophic basis. An incredible amount of mind power is wasted in acquiring and habitually using our present cumbrous and incongruous system. The letters of our alphabet require additions to their number, and some emendations as well. Our list of simple phonetic sounds is not complete, and different sounds are expressed by the same visible sign. There is no systematic attempt to correlate the *form* of the letter to the nature of the *sound visually* represented as there might be. Our grammar is a chaos. It does not perfectly indicate all the relations of thought to things. Then we have a whole host of exceptions to every rule, which is a disgrace to the language of any civilised people. Remember our contention, that all breaks in the run of thought, such as exceptions are, weaken the growing abstractive continuum. We would then make our language simpler and more easily understood, at the same time more precise and efficient. Surely the medium of thought which we are all using every moment of our lives should first of all be put upon the simplest, most precise, and most effective footing. Preliminary literary knowledge would be sooner acquired, and time left in our ordinary school courses for a stock of knowledge of things themselves. Our teaching ambition hitherto has been to provide the scholars with the *means* of *acquiring* information. Now we want to

go a step further, and by simplifying the instrument of thought, enable the youth to begin his acquaintance of real knowledge, to bring his mind into touch with actuality at an earlier age, and while still at school. As our argument is that the test of civilisation, or the determining factor in civilisation, is the richness of its intellectual continuum made up of abstractions which have passed into unconscious or unquestioned popular use, yet, despite that fact, are perfectly true, and bear a true co-relation to reality, it is evident the earlier the period of their acquirement and their subsequent verification in everyday experience, the better for the individual himself, the truer the co-relation of his thought to things, and the more he will aid the future thoughtful mind to further abstractive triumphs.

Then there is a third practical measure whose importance in relation to the determination of the future mind is not adequately appreciated. We refer to the adoption of the metric and decimal system in all arithmetical relations, in all matters of number, measure, weight, or quantity. At first sight one is very apt to say, what earthly connection has the system of weights and measures to do with the future mind, its character and development? More than at first sight appears. Observe what we want to determine in the future is a certain habit, attitude, or type of mind. A mind given to ordering phenomena, to reducing heterosity to particularity, and particularity to generality. And to do this not as a special effort, or at odd times, but always, as the natural duty, inclination, habit, and



pleasure of ordinary manhood and womanhood. Now number and quantity are ordered relativity. It is that at all events. It does not matter whether you take your relations from quantity itself to infinite divisibility, or ascend from infinite divisibility to the unit or whole, the process is made through relativity. In many cases this relativity can be thought and expressed in concrete number; in others this relativity cannot be expressed in its proportional relationships in specific number. It exists in thought, in difference, in the many, in intellectual proportion. But we fail as yet to find a mode of expressing in figures and symbols and exact quantitive relations *those* very real analyses and syntheses. Every year, by the aid of mathematical and physical science, the number of thoughts capable of accurate numerical co-relation to phenomena is increasing, and will increase. We see the reality of numerical relation in the precision required in chemical combinations; accuracy in numerical quantity, temperature, and time being as essential as the material itself. Among simple numbers even there runs a thread of system exemplified in decimals, and in those obscure relations where perhaps a million divisional figures are run through by one divisor, making a coherent whole or integer, a common relation existing all through. It seems evident, then, that a system of arbitrary, confused, and confusing arithmetical symbols and measures must have a disruptive, or at all events slowly disintegrating influence upon the building up of that ordered flow of thought, of that subtile

harmony between thought and phenomena, the fruit of our thought inheritance. To fuller show our meaning: There comes to the student late in life a felt necessity to adopt a true thought. He cannot get away from it or over it. The scientist who has all his life been ordering phenomena finally ends by finding himself an unconscious logical machine, everything he sees and hears he unconsciously puts on its proper shelf in his mind. If there is not a shelf there already, he makes one. What is true of individuals is true of classes and masses. Take a skilful artisan of forty: we say there is an exactness and orderliness in his attitude of mind toward his daily experiences, an accuracy of observation, a knowledge that there is a right way and a wrong way in everything, and a determination to do the right thing and the right thing only, which is a result of the scientific character of his employment; and that attitude of mind is a stable contribution to the world's progress. It carries the scientific method with its consequences among the general body of the people. Look at the thoughtlessness, the want of common sense, the absence of a due conception of a right way and wrong way in every transaction of life, the characteristic of the loafer, or the man of odd jobs. That arises from the absence of a trained co-relation to actuality. The moral weakness arises from the same causes that produce his intellectual inferiority. Imperfect observation and a seldom exercised judgment upon affairs, and especially a judgment unverified or disproved



in the immediate result. Really that is all that is implied in superior civilisation. Now the adoption of a consistent arithmetical system to all the numerical relativity of life would further educate and strengthen this systematic habit or attitude of mind among every class of society. It would tend to create some of that unconscious inclination to ordered thought, the possession of the artisan and scientific class, and that we would desire to see still lower down. The people would not only lisp, but constantly think in ordered number. Take the effect on the mind of reading a good systematic essay on a given subject. You rise after reading it consciously bettered. You feel your mind brought into contact with thoughts not only true, but accurately and systematically arranged; and your mind is braced as much by the orderliness as by the truth of the thought. It is like a peep into the order of the material universe. Again you read an illogical and badly arranged treatise. Its illogicality and bad arrangement jar upon your mind. You feel on reading it that your mind had lost some of its previous touch with actuality; that your mind as a true instrument for bringing you closer to the truth has suffered. Or put a stronger case: You read some jumble of nonsense. Why, the break of the natural or acquired run of your thought is so great that you rise from its perusal not only with a feeling of disgust, but even of headache. It is not only an intellectual but a physical injury. Our present arbitrary and inconsequent system of arithmetical relations does

something like this. It is not a synthetic, ordered, consistent, and binding relation, as it might and ought, and as we hope will be.

To sum up, then,—our position is this: That our enormous and growing stock of facts and their relations require further systematisation. In the first place, that the largest body of scientific thought should receive the utmost possible diffusion. And secondly, that our larger, if not final syntheses should be carried higher, and that these ultimate reconciliations should be real, and not merely verbal. That the mode of reaching this result will be the enlarged mental capacity of the race, feeding into the national thought crystallisations of verified experience, unconsciously though readily apprehended by the multitude. And that as practical measures for aiding this common aim we advocate the establishment of a permanent State-appointed scientific Revision Committee to control a national encyclopedia of accepted knowledge, the reform of our system of grammar, and the adoption of a scientific method of all arithmetical relations.

THE END

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